

Great Mens Advantages

AND

Obligations to RELIGION:

Represented in a

SERMON

Preached before the

KING,

IN

The Chapel at St. JAMES's,

JULY the 17<sup>th</sup>. 1698.

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By HENRY HESKETH,

Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

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[1.] J E R. v. 5.

*I will get me to the great men, and  
will speak unto them: for they have  
known the way of the Lord, and  
the judgment of their God.*

**I**T was at a time of the greatest Degeneracy of the *Jewish* Church and Nation, and a little before the *Babylonish* Captivity, that these words were spoken by our Prophet: And the Occasion was this;

The most merciful and good God, to shew how willing, and even desirous he was to spare that wretched and rebellious People, condescends to such a Condition to do it upon, as (I am persuaded) the most compassionate Man living could hardly have had the face to propose to him: *Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find one man, if there be any that executeth judgment, and seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it, ver. 1.*

It was and will be for ever celebrated and adored, as a mighty Instance of God's Mercy, and readiness to spare Sinners, that he offered to spare *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*, if *Ten* righteous Persons could be found therein; and it was as much as even *Abraham* (when so much encouraged in his Applications for Mercy), had the confidence to beg of him.

But surely it was much more, to offer to spare a whole Nation, if but *One* such could be found in it: And it is not easie perhaps to say, whether the Mercy of God in the Offer were more surprizing, or the Demerits of that People, that could not come up to so easie a Condition, the more astonishing. However it were, God's Mercy is highly exalted in the one, and his Justice sufficiently vindicated even in his sharpest Inflictions upon the reason of the other.

We may reasonably suppose the good Prophet thought this a most gracious Offer in God, and conceived some good Hopes upon the reason of it, that his People might be saved, and the impending Judgment averted; and therefore he undertakes the Inquest, in hopes that he might find some *One* Person to stand in the gap, and whose Righteousness might save his Nation from Destruction and Ruine.

To that end, he begins his Search in the *Streets*, and in the *Broad places*, in the places of common concourse, and in the crowds of the populace; and what the success of his search was there, he tells us, *ver. 3, 3.* Falshood and Perjury, Injustice and Fraud, and an obstinate course of Wickedness, without fear, remorse, or any hopes of amendment.

This, no doubt, was a great mortification and grief to the good Man: but yet he comforts himself under it, by considering that *these were poor*, and so wholly immersed in worldly Business, that they had little regard to Religion, little knowledge of God, and much could not be expected from them.

But he seems to have greater hopes of succeeding in his search among the Honourable and the Noble; *I will get*



get me to the Great Men, and speak unto them : for surely they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God.

This is the Connexion of these words, and this the Occasion upon which they were spoken: And I have chosen to speak to them at this time, not to frighten any Man by telling stories of our present Danger, and paralleling our case with that of the *Jews* at this time; nor take occasion to make any Tragical Out-cries against the Degeneracy of all sorts of Men among us at this day, much less of Those to whom I have now presumed to speak. This, perhaps would be deemed too rustick an Address for a Court, and (as it was said to *Amos*) that which a *King's Chapel* would hardly bear.

I would much rather chuse to imitate (though I can ne'er hope to equal) the Rhetorick of *St. Paul* to King *Agrippa*, who counted it the most becoming way to persuade him to believe the Prophets, to seem confident that he did; and, with the Prophet in this place, to presume upon the Religion of those that hear me, rather than seem so much as to think there is any reason to reproach them with want of it.

Thus far I hope I may be allowed to go without offence, and enquire what probable Reasons the Prophet had, for his hope to find *one* good Man, at least, among the *Jewish* Nobility; and what better reason I have to hope to find, not only *one*, but many, even all such among those to whom I have the Honour now to speak.

The Probability of this, I shall found upon these Two General Reasons:

I. The

I. The *Advantages* that *Great Men* enjoy, to the Purposes of Religion.

II. The *Obligations* that they lie under to regard it, above those that plod in the *streets*, and crowd the *broad places*.

And if I may beg the Patience of this Great Audience, while I instance Three Particulars of each of these, I shall not presume to put it to any greater straits at this time.

*First*, I begin with the First; The *Advantages* to Religion that *Great Men* enjoy above others. I shall only instance (as I said) Three of these, among many others.

(1.) That of Natural Temper and Constitution.

(2.) That of Generous, Timely Education.

(3.) That of Time and Leisure, from the necessary Incumbrances and Cares of other Men.

I. The First Advantage to Religion that I have named, is that of Natural Temper and Constitution: Which though it may seem a little mean thing to some, yet is perhaps as worthy of consideration in this case, as any other.

Every Man is wonderfully and *curiously* made, as the holy Psalmist hath observed long since: but perhaps *Great Men* may be said to be so in some respects above others, their Blood being generally said to be more refined, and their Bodies of a finer Mould than those of meaner Men.

There is more sense in that common Adage (*nasci à principibus, &c.*) than is commonly taken notice of; and

and it may be, happiness of Natural Temper may be one reason upon which it hath been spoken, as well as some others.

The Issues as well as Flights of *Eagles* and *Jays* (saith the Greek Proverb) are very different: And we see it true, all Creatures naturally instance the Seminal Vertues and Properties of their Progenitors; and it is commonly seen to be so in the present case of Persons honourably extracted; their very Natural Tempers and Humours are more tender, soft, and ductile, than those of a courser grain.

Now sweet and good Nature is a mighty apt Disposition to Religion; and in truth, one is but the Perfection of the other. The great purpose of Religion, is to refine and sublimiate Humane Nature, and to reduce it to its primitive Standard; in which the First *Adam* was as Eminent for all the Sweetnesses of Nature, as for Innocence, and therefore one, because he was the other.

And it is worth observing, That the Second *Adam*, who came to restore us to the true state of our Nature, as well as to reconcile that Nature to God, was himself the brightest and most matchless Instance of Good-nature that ever shined in the World: So sweet and obliging in his Deportment, so kind and courteous in his Conversation, so affable and easie of Address, so exorable and ready to do good when solicited to it, so obliging to all, and so sharp to none; unless it were to those Fanatick Zealots, the *Pharisees*, a Sect of the most peevish, morose, proud, supercilious Persons that ever pretended to Religion in the World; all whose Religion consisted only in a starch'd Formality, in extolling themselves, and censuring and condemning

all others, who indeed were the shame of Religion, and their Lives the sharpest Satyr against it; and who (together with all of their rude, boisterous, uncharitable Temper) are the unfittest of all Men to pretend to Heaven, where nothing but Love and Peace dwells; that is to say, where Good-nature shines in its Perfection, and is advanced indeed to the Image and Likeness of God, that Universal Source of Sweetness and Love, who is *kind to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works*, whose Catholick Bounty like his own *Sun shines upon all*, and embraceth in its arms of love the whole Creation.

This is that happiness of Nature that is not only so aptly and nearly disposed to Religion, but is indeed the very anticipation of it: That soft, mellow, and well-prepared Ground in which those tender Seeds of Religion and Vertue easily grow, and happily flourish, that would be lost and die in the rugged and the churlish.

2. Another Advantage to Religion that *Great Men* enjoy above others, is that of a Timely, Generous Education; which when it is joined with the former, is such an Advantage to Religion as can hardly be defeated.

The care of Educating Children in some becoming measure, can hardly be supposed to be neglected in such a Place as this, where the Obligations of Nature are so strengthened by the Sanctions of Religion, and where to fail is counted such a scandalous Degeneracy from both.

But yet it must be confess'd, that some Parents lie under such narrow and pinching Circumstances, that their Care cannot extend far: And it is not to be thought,



thought, that those who are so hard put to it to provide Necessaries for their Bodies, should do very much towards cultivating and adorning their Minds.

But where the Inclinations of Nature are advantaged with all the supplemental Aids of Fortune, so that Parents are every way able to do that for their Children, which they feel themselves so strongly prompted by Natural Affection to do; yea, and where giving a Man Generous Education, is even an instance of Gentility it self, and one thing by which a Gentleman is distinguished as much from, as he is exalted above others of a meaner Character, there to be wanting in this, would be as great a blemish to Himself, as an injury to his Children.

And how far soever the Age may be thought to be degenerated, yet (God be praised) it is not so wholly sunk into Brutality, but that there is so strong a sense of the Excellency of Vertue, as well as meanness of Vice, upon the worst Mens Minds, that he that is the lewdest Prostitute to Wickedness himself, yet would willingly have his Children better principled, than to follow his loose Example.

It is a very common thing to see those that have but very little regard to Religion themselves, yet to be as careful to give their Children good and generous Education, as those that are the strictest Votaries to it. How much soever Men indulge Lewdness and Debauchery in themselves, yet they love not to see it in others, much less in such dear and near Relations.

Now under a Generous Education, I comprehend a Care of their Souls, as well as of their Bodies; a cultivating the inward part, as well as adorning the outward; a framing them to act becomingly in

their Moral, as well as to be accomplished in all the Modes of Civil Conversation. For this is that principal part of Education, which respects them in their principal Interest, and to which our Respects to our Children to do most indispensibly oblige us.

This, we know, is done by informing their Understandings with all useful Knowledge, by instilling into their Minds the excellent Precepts and Rules of Good-living, and by backing these with all those charming Arguments and Motives that may affect their Wills, and influence their Affections, and set that noble Machine into that regular and harmonious way of Acting, which was intended by that God that so curiously framed it.

Now this is so mighty an Advantage to Religion and Vertue, that there wants nothing but that Grace of God (which is extended to all) to fasten and make it effectual. This is indeed the forestalling Vice, and prepossessing as well as fortifying Nature against the Insinuations of it. It is making Vertue even connatural to the Soul; and laying such powerful Obligations to it upon the Mind, that a Man must offer force and violence to himself, before he can break through them.

And certainly were there not some strange Magick and even plain Fascination in Lewdness and Vice, it were hardly to be thought, that a Gentleman of Generous and Vertuous Education could so unravel the whole contexture of his Nature, act so contrary to his own imbibed Principles, stifle the Sentiments and clear Light of his own Mind, break through the Checks and Restraints of his own Conscience, and offer

offer a plain Rape to his own Virgin-Modesty, as to turn Prostitute to Vice; for he must do all these things, before he can allow himself to become the other.

The wise Men of all Ages have thought good Education the surest way to fix young Persons in the prepossessions of Vertue, and prescribed it as that which would hardly miscarry. And Solomon, not only the Wisest of Men, but that was guided by a Divine Spirit too, recommends it upon this Reason, *Prov. 22. 6. Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.* The truth is, he hardly can depart from it, and he must offer great violence to himself before he can.

Human Nature (notwithstanding all the crys of its Degeneracy) is not so depraved (God be praised) but that it is capable of good impressions as well as bad; and at first, to be sure, it is as a fair Paper, upon which Good may be written as well as Evil: And when vertuous Inclinations are fixed by prudent Institution, it will not be easie to act contrary to them. However, let what violence will or can be laid upon them, they will ever and anon be felt, and still be struggling to regain their freedom, and reduce the Man to the first sweetness and innocency of his Nature.

And still the more generous and careful that the Education hath been, the stronger will these good Dispositions be; and (but that we sometimes see the contrary) such as might well be thought morally impossible to be suppressed.

And this is thought so generally true, that whenever a Youth miscarries, it is commonly imputed to some fault in the Parent, and to some defect in his Education.

Education : But when there is the miscarriage of one whom all Men know to have had all due Care bestowed upon him by the other ; the Strangeness of it as much surpriseth with Wonder, as the Misery of it extorts the Compassion and Tears of the sad Spectators.

3. Another great Advantage that *Great Men* have of *knowing the way of the Lord*, &c. above other Men, is Time and Leisure to inform themselves in it.

*Time* is one of the most valuable Treasures that God hath entrusted Mankind with ; though (like other of his Blessings) Men seldom know how to esteem it, till they come to want it : And though it be certainly true, that all Men enjoy so much of this, as is absolutely necessary to all the great Purposes of Life, and the discharge of all the necessary Affairs of their respective Callings ; yet it is evident, that (like other Gifts of Providence,) it is differently dispensed, so that some enjoy more, and some less.

The Generality, and Common Sort of Men, that the Prophet was to search among in the *broad places*, lie under the burthen of *Adam's Curse*, and *in the sweat of their faces must eat bread* ; and most of them are forced to tug hard, some in one way, and some in another, before they can get it to eat : So that the common Excuse that is made for Mens neglect of Religion, because of the Hurries and necessary Avocations of Worldly Business, sounds better in their mouths, and is more reasonably admitted from them.

But *Great Men* are in a great measure exempted from this common tribute of Humanity : Their Bread is got to their hands ; and that Time which others are forced



forced to spend in getting of it, lies upon their hands, and is as a Ready-Stock to be employed to Nobler Purposes : They are manumitted from the Labour of the Field, or the Attendances of the Shop ; so that that Time which others do and must expend in these, is to them a surplussage for the Study, or the Closet, and for improving their Minds by Reading and Meditation in the one, and by Devotion in the other.

The truth of this is notorious to all, and I should but be impertinent, and waste Time my self, in insisting further on it. *Time* is a Treasure that *Great Men* enjoy in measures above the Populace, as eminently as any others.

Now it is little less notorious, what an Advantage it is to all the great Purposes of Religion, to have such vast portions of Time, which they can easily spare to the Exercises of it; or which they will spare to worse purposes.

And it would be a woful thing, and that which must one day be sadly accounted for, if this precious Treasure should be wholly mis-spent and squander'd away, if the Comb and the Glaſs in the Morning, or the Stage and empty Vint in the Evening, should ingross that Time which God hath allotted to one Sex for Devotion in the Closet and the Church ; or Sports and vain Recreations, or much worse Entertainments, should ravish away all that spare Time, which the other Sex hath allotted them to the same purposes.

A wise Man, that hath never so much Business incumbent on his hands, yet may so adjust the portions of his Time, as to reserve enough for the Exercise of Religion : And he that hath learned in any measure how to *redeem his time*, can easily spare enough for  
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the Service of his God, without intrrenching at all upon his secular Necessities.

But *Great Men* need not study this Art, nor be put to any difficulty in accommodating those Interests, between which there is no competition at all. It is but a little Time, that surveying their Estates, and taking the necessary Accounts of them, or serving their King and Country, doth necessarily employ; and he that is mostly confined to these, yet hath great portions of Time, which he not only may reserve from them, but which do indeed lie upon his hands, and therefore not only may be employed to the purposes of Religion, but great part of which must be so, or else the mis-spending of them must be answer'd for another day. And as for others that are not yet called to these high Stations, they have commonly so much Time as seems to lie as a burthen upon them; so that they are rather put to study how to pass it off, than have any cause to complain of being straitned in it.

These, and many other great Advantages to Religion (which might easily be instanced) *Great Men* enjoy above others; and the Prophet might reasonably hope, that Men thus advantaged, might *know the way of the Lord*, though the Populace were scandalously ignorant and neglective of it.

*Secondly*, And yet this was not the only Consideration that ministred to that Hope: For their *Obligations* to Religion are in proportion to their *Advantages*; and the guilt of failing to answer these, would be as great, as the indecency of defeating the purpose of the other.

— This is the *Second* thing that I have undertaken to give some Account of; *i. e.* the *Obligations* to Religion that lie on *Great Men* above others.

For

For it is a wild Conceit to think that Religion is only proper for Cottages and Cells, or that *Great Men* that are exempt from the Cares of this World, are priviledg'd from all regards to the Interest of the next. The Reverse to this is the great Truth; Religion is as becoming Courts as Colleges, and Virtue as needful for *Great Men* as any below them; and if there be any difference it lies really on this side, there lying stronger Obligations to Religion upon them than upon others.

I shall reduce what I intend to consider on this part of my Argument, to three Heads only, as I did on the former.

1. Their Obligations to Almighty God.
2. Their Obligations to Men below them.
3. Their Obligations to themselves.

Great Men's Obligations to Almighty God are above other Men's.

It is certain all Ranks and Orders of Men, (yea, every particular Person in any of these) owe so much to God, as the acknowledgment and utmost Service of their whole Life can never answer.

How unequally soever the Gifts of Providence are dispens'd to Men, yet he that receives least, receives more than he can be answerable for; for that there is no cause for any one to complain, but rather to be thankful.

But yet it is plain there is a sensible difference, and if he that receives least, owes the utmost Service of his Life for what he receives, and yet can never discharge the Obligation; sure they that receive much more must owe proportionably more, if it were possible to pay it.

Our blessed Lord speaks of it as an allowed Rule of Equity among all Men, that *to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and to whom men give much, of him they will require more*, Luke 12. 42. And if God Almighty will observe the same Rules in expecting Duty from Men (as he shews in that place he will) then the easiest Reasoning will infer, that *Great Men's* Retributions should be in some proportion according to the divine Donations; and their returns of Duty as much exceed those of meaner Men, as the rich Man's Offerings under the Law, were to exceed the Pair of Turtle Doves, or two young Pidgeons, which were to be accepted from him that was poor.

It was the great *Stagyrite's* Opinion, that *Great Men* and rich Men must needs love God: And truly if we judge by the Rules of Ingenuity and Duty, we may think so too; and certainly they must act in defiance to both, that fail in that Duty to which they are so signally and transcendently obliged. And surely if any *Land that brings forth nothing but Bryars and Thorns be nigh to cursing*; that which after so much cultivation doth the one, must needs be thought much nigher to the other.

He that had been obliged with the trust of ten Talents, was expected to make greater Returns of Improvement, than he that had received but half so many, and still the Returns were expected in proportion to their Receipts.

And if in the true Reddition of the Parable, *Great Men* be those that God hath put such an Honour upon in the Surplusage of his Gifts above others, then the Parable will be found a true Story in the Subsequent part of it too, and the Rewards or Punishments will be



be proportionably greater or less, according as they have answered, or as they have failed to answer what was so justly expected from them.

If they are bound to walk in the way of Righteousness that find it stuck with Thorns, sure they to whom it is strowed with Roses, and endear'd with all possible Allectives, should do so much more ; and if he should bear *precious Seed*, that goeth to sowe it *weeping*, certainly he that hath not only hope of the same *sheaves* hereafter, but whose Seed-time is so every way pleasant and inviting, should more cheerfully do so.

Many a good Man serves God conscionably and cheerfully in the want of many things ; but one might think none should fail to do this, who may do it in the *abundance of all things*. And if the Children of *Jacob* were bound to serve God in a dry and barren Wilderness, sure their Obligations to do so in a fruitful and pleasant *Canaan* were much stronger.

2. Another mighty Obligation to Religion that *Great Men* are under above others, results from their Respect to others below them ; who are so apt to Copy from them, and to square their Lives by those Measures which they give them.

A mean Man's Life commonly passeth off without Observation : And as if he be Righteous the Benefit is his own, so if he be the contrary the harm is to himself ; few are benefited much by the one, or prejudiced the other.

But *Great Men* move in a higher and more conspicuous Sphear ; and the Blessing or Contagion of their Example spreads much further. When a great Tree falls the whole Vicinage of Underwoods is bruised by

it, as well as it is guarded from the Winds, and shadowed from the Heat by its standing.

It were a Common-place subject to treat of the Power of Example, or stay shewing what force it hath in forming the Manners of Men, even above Precept and Law. There is Experience to attest the Truth of this in Fact, as well as there are Reasons to give in the account of it. And if so, then the more conspicuous and eminent that the Person is, the more Operative will his Example be, which way soever it moveth.

The Examples of Parents, Tutors, and Masters have a strong (though secret Power) upon Children, Pupils, and Servants; and therefore they are obliged to take great care of their own Lives and Actions, for their sakes as well as their own.

The good Life of a Clergyman is said by all to be his best Homily, and his good Example more effectual to perswade than all his Preaching. And Woe be to him whose Life is a Confutation of his Doctrine, and who prejudiceth more against Religion by the one, than he can ever hope to endear it to them by the other.

And yet alas Clergymen are but little things now; and Men have learned to regard them but as such; they move but in a little compass, and make but a small Figure in the World, in comparison of the *Great* and the Noble. These are the Men truly now that are the *Lights and Cities upon a Hill*, that are depended upon by many, and observed by all. And as their Example will almost constrain the one sort, so it will strongly induce the other to Imitation. Interest will engage some, and their Eminency will incline others

others to transcribe their Practice into their own Lives.

And give me leave to speak a few plain words, now that I am upon this Argument. We may talk of reforming a vicious Age by good Instruction, and by wholsom Laws; by telling Men the danger of Sin and Vice, with respect to the Interest of another World, and by threatening to let them feel the Smart and Punishment of it in this. But alas, we are sad Spectators of the Inefficacy of both; the Prophets may cry aloud till their Lungs crack, and Senators may make Laws as Penal as they can; and yet the Effect be far from answering the Intendment; few will believe the Report of the one, and almost as few regard the other.

Living Sermons, and living Laws would do something, but the Dead will be found (like other dead things) to be cold and unactive.

I am apt to think that if the wise Sanctions of Laws against Profaness were duly executed by the Guardians of Law, it would have some Effect upon some Men. I am Glad to have these Laws awakened, and Magistrates put in mind of their Duty by Solemn and well Pen'd Proclamations, and I think God Almighty ought to be prais'd that puts it into the Heart of the Supreme Authority of the Nation, to think the suppressing Vice and Profaness, a Matter worthy of their greatest Care. But surely it is a mean thing, and that which looks little better than like mocking of God and the World too, to make good Laws, and put forth Proclamations for the Execution of them, and yet never to regard or think of them more. It is worthy enough of Blame, to see those that

that should be the Prince's Hands, to put Laws against Vice in Execution, to connive at the daring Committers of it in all places; but it is worse to see those very Persons openly and Scandalously commit it themselves, which yet I doubt may be seen in some.

But I withdraw. I was saying that if the wise Sanctions of Laws were duly executed, it would have effect upon some; but I say now, if the Virtues recommended by Laws, were recommended too by the Lives of the Lawgivers, it would certainly have effect upon all.

Moses and his Successors had the Holy unction upon the Head, as well as Aarón, and those that Succeeded to him; and if that Oyntment did not only stay there, but reach the next adjoining Parts, and thence descend even to the *Skirts of his Cloathing*, it would be found Sanative indeed, and soon Imprint a Divine Character upon all.

And (to go on with the Allusion in the same Psalm) if that prolifick Dew which falls upon the top of Hermon, did both Water the Hills of Zion, and the next adjoining Exaltations, and thence descend even to the lowest Vallies beneath them; the Prospect would shew lovely indeed; the Top would look beautiful and verdent, the Declensions would be adorned with Trees and Fruit, *the Vallies would even laugh and sing* under their Burthens of Corn, and the whole be happy as a Hill, or as a Field which the Lord had blessed.

When the Sun shines clear, and enlivens the World by its warm Rays; and when the Stars regularly impart those Balsamick Influences which they



they receive from him, to the lower World, we see how comfortable and happy the Effects are. But when black Clouds obscure that Sun, Storms and Showers soon follow; and when shaggy Comets climb up into the Region of the Stars, and by their preternatural Corruptions, or noxious Contagions infect the Air, then all Men dread the Omen, and Plagues, and Blasting, Scarcity and Droughts usually follow, and justify their Fears.

It is thus in the moral World, my Brethren, as well as Natural, when the superior Orbs move regularly, all things below act Harmoniously to their Motions. When *Kings become nursing Fathers* to the Church, and by their own Conscience and regard to Virtue and Devotion, bring it into Credit and Fashion: When the great *Mountains having brought Peace, the little Hills shall teach Righteousness to the People*; then we may begin to hope well; then there may be some likelihood of the Kingdoms of the World becoming the Kingdoms of God and his Christ, and then we may talk more reasonably of a Millennium.

Happy are they that live under such Divine and Heavenly Influences; but thrice happy are they that transmit them: The blessed Effects will be visible upon Earth, but their Reward is with their God: And that opens the way to.

3. The third and last great Obligation upon *Great Men* to Religion, which I shall mention at this time, and that is, the Obligation to themselves, and the respect they ought to have to their own Interest.

It is certain, Religion and Virtue is a thing of universal Advantage, and all Ranks of Men would find their

their Accounts in it, whatever is really the Interest of any Man, with respect either to the present, or future state of things would certainly be found by a due regard to it. So that in truth, every Man is so far regardless of his own true Happiness, or so far consults for it by improper means, as he is regardless of Religion, or acts contrary to it.

But perhaps there may be reason to say, that *Great Men's* Obligation to Religion (even upon this Reason) may be more pressing, than that upon other Men.

In this World it is plainly seen to be thus, for they have Honour and Grandeur to consult for more than others, which to them ought to be as dear as their Lives; it being the only Firmament upon which their Distinction from others is Founded. And truly I see not why their Interest as to another World, may not be thought so too, I mean their Happiness and Glory if they be Religious, or their Punishment and Misery if they be not, greater than that of others. Let me crave leave to represent these two distinctly in a few words.

1. Their Obligation to themselves, with respect to this World, and all their valuable Interests in it; 'tis certain Religion and Virtue is the only Telescope to secure all these; *Godliness hath the Promise of this world, as well as that to come*, (saith St. Paul,) and it can be demonstrated upon true Reason, that it is the surest Expedient to whatever is any true part of Man's present Happiness.

I will Instance but in one of these, because it is peculiar to *Great Men*, and that is true Honour. This, (as I said but now) is the great darling Interest of

*Great*

*Great Men*, and ought to be dear to them above all things, next to their God. So that a Protestation upon Honour from a Nobleman, is counted as Sacred and Obligatory, as an Oath immediately to God from other Men.

Now it is certain the only true Foundation and Support of this is Religion and moral Goodness; this makes a Man really what he should be, yea, and causeth him to be Esteemed, Valued and Honoured as such by all others.

Great Men's high Titles, Offices and Stations may justly challenge external Respect from others below them; but it is Enamelling those Characters and Titles by real Virtue, that engageth their inward Respect and Reverence, and we need but consult common Observation to justify this. A *Great Man* may be star'd at, and Conju'd to by some for his glittering Garb, his Retinue, or his high Character; but a *Great good Man* is Loved, Adored, and Honoured by all. Let me have leave, without Offence, to shew the difference in a single Instance or two.

What a vast difference is there in the Esteem and Honour Men have for those Noblemen, at whose Gates Troops of the Poor and Needy are daily Relieved, from what they have for those at whose Gates as great Crowds of poor Creditors are daily waiting and crying? What Complaints and Curses are the one persued with, while the others are followed with Blessings and Prayers?

The difference is as visible in all other particulars of Virtue and Vice, as well as these. *One dead Fly causeth the Oyntment to stink*, (saith King Solomon) and we see it true. What a Stain doth our known Vice

bring upon their Names! and what a Rebatement is it of their Glory! what a Lessening is it of *Great Men*, what a Debasement of the Noble, to see them compass'd about with the *wickedness of their Heels*, and Sullied with the Vices of Grooms and Porters!

We may conclude how it is at present while they live, by considering how it is with those that are dead; how have the Great, the Valiant, the Virtuous and brave Men Embalmed their Names, and with what Honour are they remembred in the Records of Time! Their Monuments are beheld with Reverence, and passers by Salute them, with a *Peace be upon him*, as the *Jews* did, and all Eastern Nations do to this day, while *the Name of the wicked shall rot*, (saith the Wise King) their Ermins are stain'd, and their Memories often detested, they fix a Blemish even upon their Posterity; and if their Names be found Written in the Annals of their Nation, there is almost always some Note of Infamy sticks upon them.

• 2. And yet there is a greater Interest that this Obligation results from, and that is the Happiness or Misery of another World; for even those that *are called Gods must dye like Men*, and *Princes must fall* as well as the People, and then they must enter upon an everlasting State, and be happy and blessed, or miserable and punished as truly as other Men.

Now the great God hath assur'd us, that Religion only makes the distinction, entitling Men to one, and securing from the other, and every Man finds something in himself that attests to this Truth; the highest of Men feel Presages and Boadings of this in their own Breasts, as sensibly as those below them.

Greatness



Greatness is so far from securing Men from a Sense of Guilt, that it sets it on more sharply; and even those are haunted with Fears of a future Punishment, that are set above all Fear or Danger of any now.

And the Holy Scriptures represent this most fully, according to those Jealousies or Hopes of Mens own Minds, assuring us that the Holy and Good, the Charitable and Just *shall see God*, while the wicked *shall be turned into Hell with all that forget God*.

And it is worth observing, that it makes no difference, or shews any *Respect of Persons*; it doth not tell us that God hath appointed different Terms of Salvation, or made it possible for *Great Men* to be saved upon easier Conditions than others; it seems rather to determine the Case the other way, and (as I said before) to require more from them who have received more, rather than to be content with less.

Now this surely is a Consideration of great Weight indeed, and that which ought to have Effect accordingly, supposing their Case but equal with others; for it will be a woful thing, when those that have *received their good things* in this Life, shall receive none but *Evil* in the next; and those that have been Exalted almost above Men in the one, shall be depressed as low as Devils in the other.

But if the Cases be really different, then it should strengthen the Consideration, and make it more affecting, for then the greater Blessing and Reward on one hand, or the greater Damnation and Punishment on the other, is to be expected or feared.

For as it may reasonably be supposed, that the Religion and Virtue of Princes and *Great Men*, that after all that hath been said (it must be confessed) doth break through many Temptations, and some Difficulties, and Benefits so many beside themselves, is more acceptable to God, and shall accordingly be rewarded above that of others: So it may upon the same Reasons be concluded, that their Irreligion and Profaness is more detested, and shall proportionably be more severely Punished.

And then it will be a woful Case indeed, when the good Things shall not only be Converted into Evil, but even into worse, because they have been good; and the Suffering and Damnation be intended and heightened hereafter, in proportion to the Blessings that were enjoyed here; when those that were so much raised above other Men in this World, shall be sunk as much below them in the next, when the Poor and Mean, the Despised and Contemned shall enter into the *Kingdom of God*, while the Noble and the *Great* shall not only be *shut out*, but cast into eternal Horror and Darkness.

This is a Condition that it highly concerns all that can consider things to beware of, and much more those who are so much Advantaged with Abilities and Parts to consider, if the Mean and Grosser sort of Mankind, who are thought to be but one Degree above Brutes, if the Poor and Needy that are broken with Thoughts and Cares of providing Bread, if the Laborious and Bustling, who are

Condemn-

Condemned to perpetual Labour and Drudgery for a Subsistence: If any of these, (I say) lived regardless of another World, and the Interests of it, the Wonder were less.

But if those whose Minds are Refined and Polished both by Nature and Art, and are under none of those pressing Necessities which hinder the Operations of the Mind, should be as Regardless and Stupid as they: If they that have every thing needful for the Conveniencies and Comforts of this Life provided to their Hand, so that they have nothing in comparison to take care of but that to come, should yet live insensible of it, and so as to forfeit for ever the Happiness thereof, it would be strange indeed, and such a Reflection upon their Reason and Prudence, as we want a Name to set forth the Greatness of.

And (to conclude this sad Reflection) if the poor Prophet should miscarry in his Search for a good Man among these, no Tears were sufficient to bewail the Disappointment.

But I am resolved this Discourse shall not set in a Cloud, nor proceed to tell any Stories of such a Disappointment. *I hope better things* of those that hear me, and this solemn Religious Appearance Ministers to that Hope.

Those that shew so much regard to Religion, as thus becomingly to attend these solemn Services of it, I hope retain a suitable Respect to it in their Minds, and are sensible how much it concerns them, to Govern their Lives in some competent Degree by the Holy and Divine Measures of it.

Those

Those that know the way of the Lord, I hope walk in it. And those that have learned the Judgments of their God, I still hope will live according to them. Which may the Grace of God ever incline, and enable them to do in this World, and may the same Grace everlastingly reward them in that to come. Amen.

FINIS.